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Ontario Women's Directorate

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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH
Promoting Healthy, Equal Relationships Key To Reducing Sexual Violence

TORONTO – Sexual Assault Prevention Month (May) is an opportunity to mobilize collective action to end violence against women and set an example for younger generations, said Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues today.

"Sexual assault is a serious problem in our society that we must all play a role in eradicating," said Pupatello. "Attitudes about violence against women and girls are formed at a young age, so it is important that we engage children and youth in discussions about the importance of equality and respect in relationships."

A recent Statistics Canada report stated that 61 per cent of sexual assault victims were youth under the age of 17. The report also noted that girls between the ages of 11 and 17 are at the highest risk of sexual assault. Another study also indicates that in 80 per cent of sexual assault cases reported to police, victims knew the accused.

Information about sexual violence prevention, warning signs and where to get help can be found on the Ontario Women's Directorate website, www.ontariowomensdirectorate.gov.on.ca. Community-based organizations can also obtain a toolkit to help raise awareness about the issue on the website.

Earlier this year, the government announced $1.9 million for sexual assault centres – the first funding increase in 13 years, bringing total annual investment to $12.5 million. Last December, the McGuinty government also launched its Domestic Violence Action Plan, which includes a public education and prevention campaign to mobilize communities to play an active role in ending violence against women and girls.

"Our province's strength and prosperity lies in our people and our communities," said Pupatello. "Raising awareness of what can be done to prevent sexual violence is a significant step forward in making our communities safer for everyone."

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